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**T**HE Methodists are now become a Body so conspicuous and numerous; and their principles gain ground so rapidly in every part of the Kingdom; that were there no other Inducement to Inquiry; Curiosity alone might prompt us to look into the Principles and Conduct of these people, and to examine, the means by which they have risen to their present Greatness, and also by what Management they are supported.

It highly becomes the Statesman to mark the progress of a People, who sometime or other may have a considerable effect upon the body politic. It becomes the Religious man to observe

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serve them; as the Interest of Religion is certainly very much concerned. And the Philosopher too, in an Inquiry of this Nature, may have an opportunity of tracing some of those principles, which have such a powerful effect upon the human mind.

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SINCE the Institution of the Jesuits, we cannot meet with an Instance of such a vast Body, managed with so much Dexterity; and Yielding so perfect and compleat Obedience to the will of one man; a people scattered over the different parts of the Kingdom, differing often in every respect, in Education, Temper, Interest, and habits of Life; yet all tractable, all subject to the Direction and Controol of him, who regulates this Mighty Machine, and turns it whithersoever he pleases. In this Condition, has this Body continued for a good Number of Years, spreading and increasing, striking out its Branches to the different quarters of the World: and during all this time, they have been affected with no material schism to endanger their Existence.

LET us then enquire, first, into the Policy by which they have been raised, and are managed: secondly, into the Nature and Tendency of their Doctrines; and thirdly, into their Morals and the Service they do to Mankind.

THE first thing, which strikes an observer, in this Inquiry into their Policy, is the accommoda-  
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ting nature of their principles and Conduct. They become all things to all Men. The Methodists are a Singular Phœnomenon in the religious World. They stand up as a particular Sect, but, at the same time, receive into their Bosom, People of very different persuasions, all retaining their Original professions. Their principles are neither liberal nor tolerant, and yet people, of the most Opposite sentiments, unite in this Society. When the Reformers broke off from the Church of Rome, and when other Sectaries revolted from established Churches; their first step was always to possess their followers with the most irreconcilable Aversion to the Mother Churches, and, in a stubborn and headstrong Humour, to tear asunder all the ties, that formed the Original Connection. The consequence was, the Spirit of Party broke forth; mutual antipathy took place; each side became armed with hatred and Jealousy; and every avenue was carefully guarded, on either side, against all future Intercourse or Connection. Quite different, and much more perfect has been the Policy of the Methodists: It has been dictated by a Sound head and a cool heart. Hurried on by no Violence of Zeal, they have stolen in upon the prejudices; and without alarming, have insinuated themselves into the hearts of Mankind. They are taught never to desert (at least nominally) their Original profession: they frequent the Ordinances of their respective Original Societies; they adhere to all their forms; hence living upon good Terms with their former

Brethren, they have a free intercourse and communion with all their Members ; they have an opportunity of insinuating themselves into their Favour and good Graces ; and by superior pretensions to Religion they have a claim also upon their Respect. Here then are great advantages in making Profelytes. The Reformers and the Sectaries, however sincere and honest, certainly acted with too much Zeal and Bitterness, to gain followers ; but the Methodists conduct themselves with all the good management of the most able politicians. The hearts of the former, were too much interested to employ Address, whilst the latter sap the foundation of their Antagonists, without the declaration of Hostilities. By a professed adherence to original Principles, they make the attack, without creating the Suspicion of their design ; and hence the new Converts become insensibly transformed, without feeling the Shock that an immediate rupture would produce. Into this Body are collected people of all persuasions ; and all their several Differences are covered over with the broad Cloak of Methodism. They retain the features of their Original Societies ; but these are so touched and modified, as to exhibit at the same time a resemblance of that new and large Body into which they are now incorporated. At the stated regular times for Worship, they are at liberty to go where they please, and profess what they will ; providing, only they be punctual at the usual hours of their Society. On that Solemn Day, peculiarly set apart for Religious worship ;  
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either from a good natured complaisance, or perhaps from the principle of a seasonable Policy; they interfere with none of the Hours appointed for the Church Service. With an affected Humility and an artful respect, they content themselves with filling up the several Vacancies of that important Day. Thus none need absent themselves from their service, on the pretence of attending on other places of Worship; and all are invited upon the plea, that to hear their Sermons, or their Prayers, is a much more eligible way of spending those hours, than they can find any where Else.

BUT a Second Advantage, to which, the Methodists are indebted to their present pre-eminence, equally shews the good Policy of their Founder, and his extensive acquaintance with human Nature. With a proper insight into the human heart, he saw our natural Love of Variety, and the charms that novelty can produce; and he has happily accommodated his Plan to these principles of Nature. In other Religious Societies, where the Service is performed by a staid and regular Pastor, however eloquent He may be; of whatever extensive knowledge and painful Industry; yet when once people become familiar with his manner, with his address and his usual train of preaching; He loses many of those attractions, which the charms of Novelty produce. They may regard him as a man; they may honour him as a good example, and they may love him as a Friend; and on all those ac-  
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counts wish for his Continuance ; yet there are among all such Societies, many who still wish to hear some new doctrine, or at least some new manner. Here the Methodists have every advantage. The attention of the fickle, of the giddy and the weak, is constantly supported by a continual round of new Preachers : some one or other of whom are perpetually entertaining them with something New. And no sooner do the charms of Novelty begin to decay, than he is removed from his present round, to give place to a fresh successor. Thus the itching ears are perpetually tickled. Were it not for this advantage, Methodism, with all its pretensions to sanctity, must long ere now have sunk into Obscurity and Oblivion. This plan, to be sure could be supported on no other principle, than the one adopted by this Body. Being like the Jesuits, under the direction of one General, possessed of absolute authority, He can dispose of his subordinate Officers to such stations and employments as may best suit their Capacity and Address ; and relieve them by what Successors He knows to be the fittest. This we may regard as the grand principle, which inspires life and vigour to the whole of this Machine. It is to be lamented however, that this is an advantage purely accidental, and does not promise to be of long duration. It may not be in the power of the present Leader to appoint a Successor worthy to fill his place. The consequence must be, that in the Struggle for Power and Pre-eminence, the contest may shake the very fabric to its foundation,

tion, and Split this numerous Body into innumerable and incoherent parts.

BUT to return to the consideration of this principle of Novelty, to which the greatest attention possible is always paid. Besides the regular Preachers, there are in every Society fresh hands starting up every day, under the different denominations of Exhorters, Leaders of Classes, such as practice the duty of prayer, with all these subordinate distinctions, which I cannot sufficiently describe. Thus they are every day hearing or seeing some new thing. When to this also we add a catalogue of Anecdotes, Experiences, Visions, Miraculous Interpositions, &c. nothing can be better calculated for amusing and entertaining weak and deluded men. The Managers of the Country Theatres, when the attention begins to flag, are obliged often to have recourse to Tumblers, Rope-dancers, and such like, in order to collect a good house. Upon the same principle and with the same Design is all the different Entertainment provided for the Tabernacle. It is amusement at the Bottom. Carry the same people to a regular place of Worship, and lay before them the most important duties of Life; they feel no Interest in what you say, they enjoy no pleasure: but carry them to the Tabernacle, entertain them with things miraculous and improbable; things that have not the smallest Tendency to make them either wiser or better; they are then in their Element, they are transported. Now where is the difference between  
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tween going to the Theatre and the Tabernacle. It is to raise the Passions in both. Some take pleasure in hearing what will make them laugh, others in what will make them cry. Some like such Subjects as call forth Grief and Tenderneſs; others of a more obſtinate temper delight in Subjects, that will rouse their Fears. It is the prevailing temper that determines, whither you shall go, to the Play-houſe or among the Methodiſts.

BUT I come now to a third Advantage, belonging to this Body, and to which they owe perhaps much more than to any other thing. Every member is immediately raised to Conſequence, and flattered with Hopes, as ſoon as he enliſts with theſe people. This Society, above all others, pays the greateſt attention to every member, whatever may be their rank, or character in Life. So far perhaps ſuch Conduſt is laudable, did it not too often degenerate into a hypocritical careſſing. No ſooner does a perſon commence Methodiſt; than he may hope to riſe through all the different gradations of the Society, and may even aſpire to become in time a travelling Preacher. For as Learning and good ſenſe are not eſſentially requiſite to the preferment; this opens a door of hope even to the moſt ignorant and illiterate. Here then is a wide field, to every man of Ambition. And the lazy, the awkward, and the unſucceſſful in their ſeveral Original Professions, may here hope to riſe to ſome Diſtinction. For, though fit for  
nothing

nothing else, by a moderate share of Diligence, by a good Front, and a proper Initiation into the current Language and cant Phrase of the Tabernacle, they may in due time be qualified to appear with applause in the Character of an itinerant Teacher. But though their Ambition may not soar so high as this Distinction, from the very moment they enter this Society, a consequence is stamp'd on their Character. Men and Women, even ignorant Lads and Lasses, soon take upon themselves to visit the sick, to administer comfort to the disconsolate, to endeavour the conversion of their Brethren, and even to pray in publick. Many may be named, who without discovering the smallest signs of good sense, in the common affairs of Life, are intrusted immediately, or however take upon themselves these important Duties: Duties, which require good sense, fine feelings, a discernment of character, and the most delicate attention, to be discharged as they ought. No wonder then, that we hear of so many shocking Effects; madness, despondency, great terror and agitation of mind, brought on undoubtedly by the ignorance and rudeness of these rough Agents. It is a consideration, I think, that cannot fail to rouse the indignation of the serious and sensible, to think on these shocking Prostitutions; the most important Concerns, and the most delicate Situations of Life to be committed to the management of these ignorant and unfeeling Creatures.

BUT I am not concerned at present to trace  
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the principles, or to state the consequences of this Conduct. I mean only to remark on that deep Policy, which employs such means for the encouragement and propagation of Methodism. Other Religious Societies have no bait of this kind to hold out to their Members; they can give them no hopes of any kind of preferment. They must rest contented with the humble appointment of Hearers.

EVERY one knows, how powerful a principle Ambition is in the Government of the human heart; and all must admire how dexterously it is applied on the present occasion. Thus you may see how artfully these several different principles operate for the advancement of this Profession; so that perhaps, there are few Religions, that ever owed so much to refined human Policy, as the Tenets of this People.

A fourth cause, of very considerable importance, is the liberal dispensation, that they give from strict Morality. This part, I am afraid, they will not very readily acknowledge: but however little they may be inclined to the public avowal of such a principle; yet the great stress they lay upon other things; the general odium, into which they labour to bring all the doctrines of moral duties; and the very slight manner, in which their Preachers insist on good works; all prove, that their Morality is very lax, and that a virtuous Life bears no great price in their Religion. Thus by opening a new and an easy  
Passage



Passage to Heaven, it is no great wonder if they meet with a number of Votaries. Various have been the devices of men, since the first planting of the Gospel, to elude the obligations it brings us under to a virtuous Life. In one age of the Church, men laid great stress on Pilgrimages, on Crusades, on hunting after the Relics of Saints and Martyrs, and on expelling the Infidels from the Holy Land. To enlist under the Standard of the Cross, to butcher in their Zeal the Saracens the Invaders of Jerusalem, they were taught to believe was a service, the most acceptable to God. At other times the building of Churches, and the Endowment of Religious Houses, was a sufficient Atonement for all Sins, and the surest road to happiness; whilst a different class trusted their eternal Salvation to the Efficacy of these pardons and indulgencies, which the Vicar of Christ, from his fund of merit, has the sole right to bestow. Thus the externals of Religion, too often under the guidance of the fancy, have fluctuated with the fashions of the times; but its Essentials; the great duties of Morality are immutable and eternal. Heaven and Earth shall pass away; but the obligations to virtue shall remain fixed and immoveable. All the former fashions have been discouraged and ridiculed; but the present age has discovered a much easier and cheaper passage to Heaven, a passage that may be obtained without any bodily exertion or danger. The Methodists preach up Faith alone, as both the shortest and surest Road to Heaven. No stress is here laid

upon good works, no great necessity for a virtuous Life. Can any offers be more inviting to the Dishonest, to the Profligate, to the Adulterer, to the Blasphemer, and in short to wicked men of every Denomination and Description. No wonder then, that such a number of these Classes are daily climbing up to this fold. Methodism gives the same ease to the Conscience, as the Pope's pardon did in former times, and as it still does among the people subject to this superstition. Methodism is popery in disguise. The same spirit pervades every part of this System. They, I will own, do not maintain the doctrines of purgatory, the intercession of Saints and several other ridiculous tenets. But these are only harmless absurdities, that serve men to laugh at, but do little injury to morals. But the Roman Catholics say, that there is no Salvation, without the pale of their Church; so in effect, say the Methodists. The Catholics maintain that the Pope has a power to pardon Sins: the Methodists say, join us and you are sure of forgiveness. On the strength of the Absolution of a Priest, the Catholics have a perfect confidence of obtaining everlasting happiness; and upon joining the Society of the Methodists, and on the strength of some inward feeling alone, and the declaration of their Teachers; these deluded people with equal arrogance and presumption assure themselves of Heaven. It is easy to see, that a false confidence, and a disregard to every moral duty must be the natural consequence. It is no wonder then to find persons of the most abandoned

Characters

Characters greedily embracing such doctrines. With a great deal of outward show and some slight sacrifices, they obtain ease for their consciences at a very trifling expence; whilst they are permitted to retain the same manners, the same temper, without the labour of repentance, and without a thorough change of Life. Let a man of penetration look into this Society, and he will be able to select, a vast number that have been engaged by this powerful and seducing cause. The externals of Religion, and its zealous profession become a Substitute for the essential duties of the christian Life. This relaxation, from the strict duties of the Gospel, opens the prospect of everlasting happiness to Sinners of every degree, without an absolute forsaking of their Sins.

How unfortunate is it for man, to get entangled with mistaken notions of Religion and Duty. The Jews, in the days of our Saviour, built their hopes, wholly on the scrupulous and rigid observance of the Ceremonies of the Law of Moses, and in adhering with strictness to the Tradition of the Elders, whilst they were transgressing every part of the moral Law of God; censorious, uncharitable, unjust, and in every respect an evil and adulterous generation. Others, freed from ceremonial observance, still walk in the same Spirit. They confine Religion to prayers and preaching, and of these they never seem to have enough. These alone are to do every thing. The stress laid upon these external duties, these means only of Religion, grants them,

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in their deluded imaginations, a dispensation from the observance of the moral Law of God. They do not become better members of Society, more charitable, or less censorious; they have not more honesty or good faith; they are not more upright in their dealings; nor more faithful to their promises than the rest of the world. We meet among them with no more Integrity, or less Hypocrisy, than among other men. They are not better Husbands, or better Parents, more kind Masters, or more grateful Servants: in their families, they appear with no more advantage than the rest of the world, and few pay so little attention to their Children or their Education.

A Religion, so flattering to the Baseness and Depravity of the human Heart; that promises so much and requires so small sacrifices of importance, bids fair to be greedily embraced, and to become very popular among people who wish to gain Heaven without any great change of their Life.

BUT besides these uniform and lasting principles, which, at all times, pervade this System; they have the Address to employ several accidental advantages; and which they may deem of sufficient importance to work upon the multitude. The very weakness and infirmities of human nature, present to them an opportunity of Triumph. The Lame, the Blind, the Illiterate, and even the Silly, are encouraged to take upon  
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themselves the office of Teachers, and whilst checked by no shame, and overawed by no delicacy or sense of duty, they pour out their crude and undigested harangues; these are called the dictates of the sacred Spirit of Truth and Order; and are magnified in proportion to the infirmities, the weakness, and the incapacity of the Teacher. Such Miracles (for they are considered as such) never fail to raise the admiration of the multitude. Such means do Impostors generally employ to deceive the ignorant and the credulous. Diseases too, which on other occasions are deemed as miseries and misfortunes; by the management of these artful people, turn out greatly to their advantage. The evil Spirit, according to their doctrine, may be the cause of many diseases; but there are some which seem peculiarly in his province. Epilepsies, Convulsions, Hypochondriacs, all Lowness of Spirits, and all inward pains indicate his immediate presence. In such cases Medicine can be but of little service. They require the aid of a spiritual Doctor to expel these Devils; and, on these occasions the Methodists are always foremost in the service. They reckon it their duty to seek after such opportunities, and they hunt after diseases of this kind, with the greatest avidity. Such Feats and Pretensions exalt them high in the opinion of the people. Under the mask of Charity, they insinuate themselves into the good graces of the multitude,

BUT this, is not the only advantage they gain  
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by waiting on the bed of sickness. At these times the Spirits are often extremely low; and people, who have never before thought much about Religion of any kind, are disposed to catch at every twig, that can keep them from sinking, and to embrace any doctrine, that can administer speedy comfort under these afflictions and the near expectation of their dissolution. Then they are incessantly plied by these ghostly Comforters. Dealing liberally in the threats of Hell and Damnation, they soon persuade their sinking patients to embrace their Faith, which promises a ready pardon for all their offences, and the speediest passport to Heaven. Thus any epidemical disorder is a rich Harvest for the Methodists. They leave the worldly men to take a charitable care of their Bodies, and in their great Benevolence, they reserve for themselves the sole care and direction of their Souls. This they deem a Charity of a much more important and exalted nature.

SUCH then are some of the principles, by which these people have been raised to their present pitch of greatness: the accommodating nature of their Doctrine; the charms of Novelty; the Consequence to which each member is raised: the Dispensation they give from strict Morality; the Advantage they take of the weaknesses and infirmities of human nature, and their continual and painful attention to the bed of sickness. Taking it altogether, it may truly be considered as the most perfect system ever raised by human Policy,

Policy. The Religion of Jesus, owed nothing to the prejudices, and passions, of the human Heart: but the Religion of J. W. owes to these almost every thing. Wonderful would it indeed be then, if it did not succeed.

LET us now, in the second place, enquire into the nature of their distinguishing Doctrines, and what may be their probable Effect upon their Professors. It is very remarkable, that many who discover much sagacity and good sense in the common affairs of Life abandon all these in matters of Religion. In affairs of the utmost importance, and where they believe their eternal happiness to be at stake, they will suffer themselves to be led by men, whose Judgment they would not trust in the most trifling concern of life; such people will take upon themselves to explain the most difficult passages in Revelation, and to unravel the most involved mysteries of Religion; and will be listened to likewise with wonder and attention, to whose capacity you would not commit the settlement of the most simple account, nor hear them, with patience, deliver their opinion upon any common affair of the world. This is a strange infatuation and could not be believed, did we not see it every day verified. The truth is, that the mass of mankind, in religious matters, are often best pleased with the things they cannot understand, and love chiefly such things as are mysterious and beyond their comprehension. They listen with eager attention to such doctrines as are far above the

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capacity

capacity of any man, and several of which, if they were fully understood, could prove the foundation neither of Hope, or Comfort, or of a good Life. Involved in a mist of unmeaning terms, and puzzled with their wild fancies, they desert the plain and simple Truths of the Gospel, and seldom insist on those things, which all may understand, and, in which all are greatly interested. They may feed the fancy with unintelligible Jargon; and they may perplex the brain, in the wild mazes of mystery; but such doctrines will never enlighten the understanding, affect the Heart, or have the smallest tendency to make men either wiser or better. But still, though they may produce no good effect, yet, in another sense, they may be deemed innocent and harmless, when compared with others of their distinguishing Doctrines, which are of the most mischievous tendency. Such are their pretensions to Inspiration, and these inward feelings which ascertain the time and manner of their Conversion, which assure them of the pardon of their Sins, and confirm to them the claims of Heaven and everlasting Happiness. Such notions are productive of many bad consequences. To believe they are under the guidance of Inspiration is a fruitful source of Enthusiasm. This gives an authority, to all the wild notions, that they ever can imagine. Besides, it exposes Religion itself to Ridicule, when men attribute to the holy Spirit, all the incoherent and undigested Doctrines and Nonsense, that such Enthusiasts can vent. The admission of this principle,

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sets aside the necessity of Revelation, and gives credit to all the impudent assertions of every wild and visionary mind. There can in short be no test of truth; no common standard to resort to, to try the pretensions of men. Upon this supposition, there is no occasion for Labour, for Learning or Study of the Holy Scriptures; every illiterate Blockhead is equally fit to become an Instructor, as those who have devoted their whole Lives to the Study of these sacred Doctrines. It is no wonder then, that we meet with so much spiritual pride, so much impudence, among people of this persuasion; and so little of that Meekness and Humility, which are the most beautiful and becoming Ornaments of the Christian Character. Ignorant Men and Women, old and young, are equally proper to become the Vehicles of the Doctrines of the Gospel. Must then the Spirit of God be chargeable with all the intemperate effusions of every distempered Brain? Here is the greatest encouragement, for the Vain, and the Idle, to leave their several Callings and to become the Heralds of the Gospel. And, with respect to their inward light, their spiritual calls, their assurance of pardon and everlasting happiness; every Profligate has the same right to assume such pretences; and what have you to oppose to his impiety and arrogance? The bare hint of the consequences, is sufficient to deter men of sober minds, and who have at heart, the Interests of Religion and Truth, from giving credit to such impudent Impostors.

BUT the worst part is yet to come, and it is that part, which is the constant Burthen of all their Sermons and of all their Songs. They set up Faith in opposition to a good Life, and they are constantly making the most open attacks upon Morality and Moral Preachers. Their Followers are peculiarly delighted with these Doctrines, and are constantly retailing them. They love to make War upon Reason, and upon all the plain Duties of man. I always suspect those, that decry good Works, under whatever name they mask their attack. It creates a strong suspicion, that they want to cloak some bad deeds under the broad Covering of Faith. None ever preached good works so much as our Saviour, or laid so particular a stress upon them. It is man's most certain duty to perform them, and God will assign them what merit He knows to be most proper. The holding up Faith or Grace or Opinion, or any other thing superior to these, is to advance the standard of Satan and to go a recruiting for the Devil; and one need not be surpris'd, to see so many of dishonest principles and profligate morals enlist under this Standard. Many, that have spent the best part of their lives in the glaring violation of the important Duties of the Gospel, and in the flagrant breach of its laws, dishonest, lustful, treacherous, the Tyrants of their families, have in the decline of life taken shelter under this Zealous Profession. This is the shortest way to Heaven, were there to be no future Judgment, and no account to be given of our Lives. It is much easier and less  
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expensive for all classes of Sinners. The Dishonest may here find ease for their Consciences, without the trouble and shame of making Restitution; the Libidinous may be reconciled to his vices, without forsaking them; and men in general may indulge the same tempers; gratify their favourite dispositions, if Faith is to do all and good works not necessary. The advancement of such principles become more hazardous and accompanied with more danger, when it is considered, that this Faith may in most cases be little more than fancy, measured, not by any common standard, but only by the length of their own Imaginations. They have it not in their power, to give to the world any certain proof of its existence. All depends upon the vehemence of their own assertions; and the Hypocrite, the Profligate, and the most abominable of mankind, have the same right to assume these fancies and believe themselves, by the force of Imagination, to belong to the Elect, and to be the Children of God. All Protestants ridicule, and certainly with great justice, the folly of Indulgencies, which the Papists hold out to their deluded Votaries, and this Doctrine of Faith and inward feelings, the distinguishing Doctrine of the Methodists, must be followed with all these fatal consequences. They outsell the papists themselves in pardons. For to obtain forgiveness of Sins and assurance of Immortality, by these inward works, is carrying men to a much cheaper market, than ever the Pope opened; for here you have them without money and without price. No Doctrines can

can be more favourable to the inward corruptions of the human Heart, and none more flattering and delusive. For, upon the bare Credit of your own feelings, which no man can contradict, you may work yourself up to the belief that all your Sins are pardoned, and that you are the favourite Servants of God. Thus, we daily hear of people, after some pretended struggle and qualms of conscience, affect to give out that they have obtained deliverance from the Devil, and are now assured of eternal Happiness; and of consequence lay claim to all the privileges of the Faithful. These matters, you will find, are soon brought to a settlement. The battle does not last long: after a pretty sharp conflict, the whole business of Repentance is settled; and the Child of the Devil, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye is transformed into one of the Children of Light. And this Storm once over, all is hushed into the most profound calm. Confident of future Happiness, they glide gently down the current of time, feeling only now and then some slight shocks, not for themselves, but for their Brethren that they have left behind in the world. To men, that are not initiated into these Mysteries, there may appear something unaccountable, in the whole of this business; and to inquisitive minds something still doubtful; for, after all, you see no change in their temper, no essential change in their morals, and they preserve the same keenness, and the same attachment to the world as all other men. You perhaps hear more groans; see them more gloomy and morose,

more, more unsocial and contracted in their sentiments; all which looks more like the Children of Hell, than the Children of Heaven. No reasonable man can read our Saviour's Description of the Pharisees, but must apply it to the Methodists. "*They compass Sea and Land, to make Profelytes, and make them twofold more the Children of Hell than before, They devour Widows Houses. and for a pretence make long prayers. They make clean the outside of the cup and platter. They appear outwardly righteous, but within are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. They pay tithe of mint, anise and cummin, but neglect the weightier matters of the Law. They shut up the kingdom of Heaven against men. They love to pray standing in the corners of the Streets, and in the Market-place; and they do all their works to be seen of men.*" This Picture, though painted near two thousand years ago, is perfectly modern. Human nature is the same in all ages. Hypocrisy may change her Colours but the substance remains unchanged.

I shall now have done with their Doctrines, after taking some short notice of those terrors, they constantly deal in, as another instrument of conversion. The terrors of the Lord, and the doctrine of a future state, of rewards and punishments are proper subjects on seasonable occasions; but, to deal generally, on such subjects, have a dreadful effect upon weak minds; besides, they cause men to imbibe unworthy sentiments of the Supreme Being, and unjust notions of his Religion.

**Religion.** The promises of the Gospel, the present pleasures of the Religious Life and its future Glories, are subjects more consistent with the goodness of the great Father of all, and better calculated to support and strengthen the important duties of the christian Life. Men constantly conversant in gloomy subjects, naturally contract a gloomy and uncharitable Spirit. They banish gratitude and chearfulness; they poison all the sources of rational pleasure; they render men insensible to the love and goodness displayed every where. The consequence is, they render them unfit for the duties of Love and Benevolence, Sympathy, and Compassion, and all the other generous Affections of a good Heart. Besides, there are only few minds, that can properly bear such awful Doctrines, perpetually thundering in their Ears. The Brain soon becomes affected, the reason unhinged, and both Body and Soul suffer in the Struggle.

HAVING now seen in what Doctrines the Methodists generally deal, it may not be improper to take notice of their Omissions; and, agreeable also to this part, we may observe what are the parts of Scripture from which they chiefly preach.

THE parts of Scripture in which they seem to take the most delight, are the Song of Solomon, the Revelation, the darker parts of the Prophets and Epistles, and such passages as afford the widest play for the Imagination, and where the  
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Fancy is laid under no restraint. The darker the Subject is, and the less of Religion, the more genius does it require to bring good Doctrines from it, and the more wonder does it raise in the gaping and astonished multitude. By a happy Gilt they can spiritualise every thing; and they can find a vast of important Truths and Doctrines in passages of Scripture, where the sacred Writer appears to have had no other meaning, than the bare literal meaning, which every candid and unprejudiced mind can discover upon the first reading.

WERE it possible to confine the wanderings of a distempered Imagination within the boundary of Reason, it would be sufficient to observe, that this Liberty which they take in interpreting Scripture, and dragging forth so many concealed meanings, must reduce Revelation to the greatest uncertainty; if every one is at liberty to depart from the plain sense, to dig for hidden treasure; and further, that there is nothing so wild and absurd, but with this freedom, we might prove from Scripture. But the fact is, that the bulk of mankind cannot rest satisfied with plain Truths and plain duties. They love in Religion what is mysterious, and these will ever succeed best in captivating the multitude, who, unshackled by a regard either to Honesty or good Sense, will freely preach what neither They, nor their Hearers understand. You seldom find such people employing themselves, about the plain duties of Religion. Here there can be nothing new

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advanced, and nothing to catch the attention of the giddy. The Life and Character of Christ seem to be no favourite subjects among Enthusiasts. They love to dwell upon his Merits; but very seldom touch upon his Example. Tasteless Bigots, derive little pleasure from the contemplation of this perfect Character; and afraid of recommending good works, or laying any stress upon them, they are extremely shy in advancing any thing upon the Moral Character of him, who hath given us an example and recommended us to follow his Steps. I do not say that they never, but I dare to say that they very rarely recommend the sublime precepts of Christianity. They will exhort us to the Love of God, because this costs us nothing. It requires no Sacrifice. It is the silent operation of the Heart, that performs this Duty, and violent pretensions suffice for evidence. But they insist very little, upon the love of our Neighbour, upon love to our Enemies, upon forgiveness of injuries, and upon the great duty of doing Good. I mean that Good, which is not confined to Sect or party, but extends to all nations and kindreds and languages; that Good, which cannot be performed by bare wishes and prayers; but requires the kindest offices of love and good actions, the being ready to distribute, the being willing to communicate; not merely the visiting the Sick, but the feeding the hungry, and the cloathing the naked, and proving a Friend to the friendless.

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FROM this view of their Doctrines, we may infer then, that the fittest subjects, for the Methodists to work upon, are the Ignorant, who know nothing about Religion; the Weak, who are the most easily imposed upon; the Vain, who have no other way to raise themselves into consequence; and the immoral and unprincipled, who want ease for a wounded conscience, and a cloak for a bad life. Examine this body and you will find them naturally split into these different Classes, which constitute this incongruous and jarring whole.

AFTER taking this Review of their Policy and Doctrines; we come next in order, to examine their Morals and the boasted Benefits, they confer on Society.

WE cannot be much prejudiced in favour of their Morals, when we recollect their avowed distinction between Morality and the Gospel. They labour to set at variance these parts, which never can be separated. Their Gospel is an undescribable something. We can say what it is not, but cannot tell what it is. Almost the only thing we can collect of its substance is, that it is something very averse to Morality. In their cant and hackneyed phrase, They speak of Gospel, and Moral Preachers. The latter, is always used as a term of Reproach; and the other the highest compliment they can pay to their Teachers. If we attempt to examine into the meaning of Gospel preaching, it seems one of those inex-

plicable mysteries not to be fathomed. If we take our Sense of it from the common strain of their preaching, it is some rant about Faith and Grace and inward Operations, interlarded with slices of Hell and Damnation. All then, that we can know of it is, that it is not a good life. People that set forward upon such principles, will not suffer us to entertain any very favourable opinion of their Lives.

THE Effence of Religion, as may be collected from Scripture and Reason, consists in a good Life; animated and supported by the pleasing hopes and comforts, that the Gospel gives, enforced by its awful Doctrines, and recommended and illustrated by the Example of good men, and particularly by the Example of our Lord Jesus Christ. Preaching and praying, and all other external Services, are necessary then so far, as they support this Life; but are by no means the end on which we are to rest; no further stress is to be laid upon them.

THE Methodists and several other Sectaries nearly allied to them, reverse this principle. The Effence of their Religion, as collected from their Preaching, their usual Talk, and their Writings, consists in praying, preaching, singing of Psalms, talking about the dark Doctrines of Revelation; and a good Life is only so far necessary as to give Credit and Currency to these Duties. I am not sure, that they will directly avow this, perhaps they do not see it themselves; but, judge  
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of them from the supreme care, with which they attend on the externals, and the little value they set upon good works, from the usual strain of their preaching; and, I think, they will hardly be able to extricate themselves from this conclusion.

THERE is another Consideration, that strengthens this explanation. The Branches of Morality, that they chiefly attend to, is either to rebuke some of these glaring Vices, that make the most noise in the world, and that are the signs of a thoughtless mind, rather than of a depraved heart; such as Swearing and Drunkenness; whilst the Duties they principally insist on, are those ostentatious virtues, which are specious in themselves; but require no great sacrifice for the performance.

IN an enquiry into this part of their Character, we may examine them, under the following usual distinction of Duties; *first*, such as are paid more immediately to God. *Secondly*, the private duties. *Thirdly*, the relative duties, and *Fourthly*, the duties we owe to Society. In the duties we owe to God, Enthusiasts of every kind seem to be of opinion, that we cannot be guilty of any Excess; that we cannot devote too much of our time to his immediate service. It was this Spirit that filled the Nunneries and Cloisters, that planted Hermitages, that peopled the Desarts; that filled the world with so many Religious Societies, that shut up in Cells so many of both sexes,  
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and secluded them from the necessary business of Society, to the ruin of Industry and destruction of Morals. The Methodists, who, in many things are actuated by the spirit of popery, and the worst part of it too; think they cannot devote too much of their time to the service of God; and many of their Followers have their Heads constantly filled, and their time very much occupied with praying and preaching.

I need scarcely observe, that the laying so great stress on such services, must foster a Spirit most inconsistent with our Idea of the greatest and best of Beings. It is representing Him as a Tyrant, and a Tyrant to be pleased only by continual fawning and flattering: a Tyrant imposing a yoke of cruel servitude upon his Creatures; as the great object of Fear, not of Love. Besides, so great a portion of time, devoted to this service, encroaches upon that time, that we are to dedicate to Industry and to Society, which our situations and dependent state require. From this Spirit, we never can expect, that the duties they pay to God can be of a rational and amiable nature. They bring down the supreme Being to their own narrow and uncharitable sentiments, and represent Him as partial, vindictive and delighting in punishment. Their trust in him must be ill founded, and their hopes joyless. Look at their Countenances, as they go to the House of prayer. They appear to be going to serve, not God, but the Devil. No joy, no pleasing hopes painted there; but dejected, clouded,  
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dark and melancholy, they are very unlike the worshippers of the Father of Mankind, a God of infinite Goodness, the God of all Comfort and Consolation. And this Spirit, contracted from their narrow and false notions of the supreme Being, extends and spreads itself in all their social intercourses. Innocent mirth, rational amusement, the pleasures and joys of Society; to laugh, to smile, are all Sins. Good God! can these be thy Servants! If Heaven is to be peopled with such Beings, what gloomy Mansions! Supposing men were to worship the Devil; what do you think would be their countenances? And is there then no Distinction, between the worship of the best of Beings and of evil and wicked Spirits? Such dismal Worshippers feel no happiness, no joy, no pleasing prospects. If Joy be within, it cannot be altogether concealed; it will sparkle in the Eyes, it will enlighten the Countenance. The God of the Methodists is not the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Their God is the object of Fear, not of Love. He is represented as enthroned in Heaven, delighting in the punishment of his weak and helpless Creatures, not surrounded with mercy, sympathizing with our Infirmities, making all gracious Allowances for our Imperfections, and rejoicing in every returning Prodigal. No prospect can be so discouraging to Man. Religion, under this representation, which should prove the comfort of man, becomes a Bondage. Religion designed for the exaltation of our nature, overwhelms us with gloomy apprehensions and Fears. Religion,

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which should make man chearful, overspreads him with melancholy. And Religion, which sheds pleasure on all the enjoyments of Life, roots up every pleasure and converts this Earth into a Vale of Misery. This Picture, I think, is not overcharged, it is copied from real Life, and is a just Representation of the Piety and Devotion of Methodists.

LET us next pass to the contemplation of their private Duties, and endeavour to estimate the improvement, that they have made in them. Here, perhaps, they appear in their greatest Excellence. By private duties, I mean only such as a man owes to himself, and which are strictly confined to sobriety and temperance and the government of the appetites and passions. In the duty of Sobriety, They have perhaps done considerable service to mankind. Among them, we do not meet with numerous instances of Drunkenness. This is a crime so open and publick, and so unpopular, that the frequent practice of it, would soon bring a discredit upon any body, that set up for the patterns of Morals, and as publick Reformers. It is the interest of the whole, therefore to watch over every offending member, and to check them in the prosecution of a Vice, that would ruin them as a Religious Society. But, at the same time, it must be owned, that there are among them, numbers of capital Offenders against Temperance, and many more that have no objections to this Species of Indulgence, providing it does not amount to absolute

solute Intoxication. And others, however moderate they may be in the article of drinking, yet give way to every indulgence in eating, which opportunities, and their circumstances, will allow. Few people live better than their travelling Preachers: they are fed like Stalled Oxen; they live not on Locusts and wild Honey, but share in all the rarities and luxuries of the Season. Their jolly Faces, and plump carcases proclaim, that they seldom sit down to a scanty Table, or partake of a poor fare; that they are not worn down with the cares of this Life, reduced by severe exercise and fatiguing Journies, or emaciated with intense application of thought and severe Study. Whatever their poor Hearers may endure, or to whatever wants they may be subjected, their Preachers do not help with their least Finger, to bear their Burthens. Such tempting prospects, may be not the least allure-ment to draw so many, from their severe and laborious Callings, to undertake such pious Service.

BUT leaving them in possession of their full credit, for the services they have done the world in correcting Intemperance; I pass on to consider them in another point, nearly connected with this duty.

CHASTITY may be regarded as a branch of Temperance, and it perhaps may be doing them no injustice to say, that taking bulk for bulk, they are no ways superior to the common herd of

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Mankind, in the same classes ; and with the same temptations. If I were to be influenced by the opinion of a celebrated Historian, and an accurate observer of Mankind, who says, “ that the “ excesses of Enthusiasm in every Age have been “ observed to lead to sensual gratifications, and “ that the same constitution, that is susceptible of “ the former, is remarkably prone to the latter” : I should be led to make considerable deductions from the credit I have given them, in the preceding observations. But I would not willingly detract from their merits, or load them with unnecessary charges, though, I must own, that the reports of the world are unfavourable to their claim, and from a survey of such of their Societies, as fall within my knowledge, I believe, if a fair account was to be taken, the balance would be struck against them. But, perhaps, considerable allowance should be made in their favour. In the first place, these Societies are in general originally formed of persons, not much distinguished for their Morals. The easy terms and the tempting offers, that they hold out to sinners of every degree, may draw the voluptuous, and the debauched, as well as others, into this sacred Asylum : and a habit of vice, once contracted, is not to be thrown off so readily ; especially when so many tempting opportunities of secret indulgence are presented.

FOR in the second place. Of all religious Societies, the Methodists are exposed to the greatest Temptations. Proceeding upon the principle, that



that no great stress is to be laid upon good works, they are better half prepared for every sensual Indulgence. Minds not fortified with a principle of aversion, must soon yield to a strong temptation. These people often stand on slippery ground. The intercourse between the sexes is very frequent, very familiar, and often very private. They are together at all hours of the day and night too, for the purpose of prayer and meditation. They have a privilege of entering Houses of every description; they travel together, to the most distant and remote places, and all under the shelter of Religion. Their close Societies are often protracted to the latest hours of the night; and their Friendship will not suffer them to expose their helpless females without some male of their own body for their Escort. I mean, no reflection on the indelicacy of such proceedings, but cannot help observing, that they must be more than human, if all of them can resist such opportunities. I will not establish the Conclusion, that may be drawn from such reasonings. I appeal to the world. Can they recollect any facts, that can account for the foul aspersions, with which occasionally both Preachers and Hearers have been loaded? And here, I leave them, in this article to stand, or fall, by the observation and experience of Mankind.

It is a reflection that affects not only this body, but also all professing Christians, that their profession does not often produce any material change in their Temper. This fact is but too

much disregarded in the world ; but when any religious Body makes superior pretensions to sanctity, and sets up for the Censurers of the world ; the first question I would put upon their Conversion ; has their religion made any material improvement in their Temper and Disposition ? If they were formerly covetous ; are they become liberal ? if peevish ; are they more contented and resigned ? if passionate ; have they learned to subdue their passions ? and if censorious ; are they now become charitable ? In answer to these Questions, no regard should be paid to words and professions. Do facts speak for them ? and does the experience of the world support and countenance this change ? If on the contrary, they continue the same, in their tempers and dispositions ; whatever they may pretend, there is no real change at the bottom. The externals of Religion serve only to cover the corruption of their hearts, and to blind the world. They are no more but Hypocrites, and ten times more the Children of Hell than before. Genuine and unaffected Religion must transform the whole Mass. It is a sacred leaven, that will leaven the whole Lump. Now, apply this to the Methodists, you will find them, in general, with the same Tempers and Dispositions, that Nature gave them, noways altered ; at least improved under their new Characters. In no class of men, can you find more of a worldly spirit than among some of their profession, and some of their Leaders have the dexterity to convert their Religion to the advancement of their fortune.

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Keen, rapacious, and scarcely honest in their dealings, with their eyes lifted up towards a Heavenly inheritance they will hold a considerable Reversion in this Earth. Godliness frequently becomes to them great gain ; but in a sense somewhat different from what the Apostle means. In dealing with them, it requires no small share of attention and knowledge to guard against being overreached. You will find, amongst them, as much craft, as many instances of prevarication, as among other men ; equally liable to shuffling and evasion, and not less inclined to all the low arts of Cunning and Deceit. In the article therefore of moral honesty, you will not perceive, that they have in any respect improved the world. But have they done any thing towards removing the natural malignity of the human heart ? I really cannot charge myself with any breach of christian Charity, nor any act of Injustice, when I say that we do not meet among them with any peculiar sweetness of temper, or that humility of heart, and gentleness of mind and manners, that we should expect to find in the meek and humble followers of Jesus. There is a spiritual uncharitableness, with which they are peculiarly chargeable. They will scarcely allow Salvation to any one, that belongs not to their Society. Thus they limit the Mercies of the Great Father of mankind to their own peculiar Tenets. Men of the most enlarged understanding, and the most upright and sincere hearts, are to be excluded from the Kingdom of Heaven, for no other reason, than that they cannot

not approve and practice the precepts of their Teachers. This is the very Spirit of Antichrist; Intolerance, and the most horrid uncharitable sentiments. In what a poor state would mankind be placed, were our eternal allotment to be decided by Men! This want of Charity in spiritual Concerns disseminates its baleful Influence to all their worldly intercourse. When the temper is soured by false sentiments of Religion, there is no chance of an equitable Judgment, even in things, that concern this world. Thus no set of men are more harsh in their censures or more rash and precipitate in their Judgments of the world, and none so destitute of that candour and benevolence which dispose us to make all proper allowances, and to put the most favourable Constructions on the words and actions of our Neighbours. This Spirit extends even farther. Closely attacked to one another and bound fast by their religious ties, they make it a Rule to promote one anothers interest solely. Forgetful what they owe to mankind, and how much they depend on the rest of the world for their Support, with unparalleled Ingratitude, they repay none of these services by a similar return of favours, but what it is not in their power to prevent. Pure Religion should open and expand the mind and diffuse a stream of Benevolence to the whole world, but Superstition and false Religion lock up all the best Affections, and narrow and contract every social Feeling.

FROM this short review of their private Duties  
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and Charity, let us next pass to consider them in the Relations, they stand in with the world at large, and with one another. The first of these that presents itself for our inspection, is that close Relation which is formed betwixt the Parent and the Child, and the consequences of which is not confined to these immediate Connections, but extend to the world and in which Society is deeply interested. With respect to the duties we owe to Parents, in the present case, I have but few facts from which to form general conclusions. But these detached cases which present themselves are not very favourable to this Body. We find among them no extraordinary exertions for the support of their aged and infirm Parents, and we see no peculiar tokens of filial affection and respect.

BUT the duty in which they are the most remarkably negligent, and for which they justify themselves by a trust and reliance on the Grace of God, and of Providence, is that which they owe to their Off-spring. No Children are so much neglected in the articles of Education, of religious instruction, in a proper attention to their moral Conduct, in providing for them a decent maintenance, and in instilling into them habits of Diligence and Industry, as are the Children of the Methodists. Their Members are so occupied, and have their time so filled up, with attending on prayers and preaching, that they have but little time left to attend to the more important Concerns of their Families; and, many  
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of the poorer sort of this Society, thinking it their duty to attend upon worship at hours unreasonably early and late, at such times leave their helpless off-spring to shift for themselves, in the best manner, that they can. And Sundays, being the proper time for the labouring part of mankind, to attend to the religious concerns of their Children; yet the whole of this day is so fully occupied by the Methodists in running after different preachers, and in religious Gossiping, that there is no time, nor chance, left for the Instruction of the rising Generation. What hazard do not such untutored minds risk in the wide world. It is not always, that these people carry their Children with them to their places of worship, and supposing that they did, the loss can never be compensated, which they sustain, by the neglect of their Parents. It is little that they can learn from such Discourses, and that little, will be but a poor recompence, for what they lose by the want of parental Instruction. One Hour, under the Eye of a kind and attentive Parent, might correct more vices and convey more solid and lasting Instruction, than they can learn from a Thousand of such Sermons. The consequence is, that when once freed from the gloomy and ghostly restraints of such Parents (if they are ever laid under such restraints) they enter the world rough and unprincipled, and with the utmost aversion to all Religion. No Children are so wild, so brutish and untractable, none more base in their morals, than the Children of the Methodists. And can we expect any other fruits

fruits from such an Education? Some of them pretend to justify this neglect, by trusting, that the Grace of God will do every thing for them, and that they can never suffer for their attention in serving Him. Thus we see men attempt to justify the neglect of one duty, by their punctuality in others. But with respect to their Justification, it may be sufficient to ask, who requires of you such Service? The care of your Offspring is your first duty, and I know of none more important, none, that can supercede this, and, I am sure, we cannot serve either God or Society better, than by doing what is in our power, to train up Children in good principles, and for Society honest and industrious Members. If Children be left to chance, or what they term to the Grace of God alone, there is but little room to hope, that they will become either useful or respectable Christians. All the labours of the most diligent Parents, and all their care are found sometimes insufficient to train up a Child, in the way he should go. But, if after this, all their diligence and care and prayers should fail, they will have one comfortable reflection to sustain themselves; that their Children have not fallen by their neglect. But besides the neglect of religious Education and moral Instruction, the Methodists are likewise chargeable with neglecting to bring up their Children in habits of Industry, and in some honest, lawful calling. The lower Classes of this Society, are not remarkable for being the most industrious in Community. Many of them are either naturally indolent, or, they

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contract habits of idleness from their Profession. They have often a vast of time to spare in their religious Clubs, in talking about Sermons and their Experiences, in running from Place to Place and from Town to Town. In the Mornings also, and in the Evenings, they have hours to spare from their daily Labours, to attend their devotions at the Tabernacles. Now, I hope, I shall not be taxed with irreligious sentiments, if I should say, that this great portion of spare time, would be much better spent in doing something for the worldly advantage of their Families. It might be the means, to raise them to a more respectable Station; it might be the means to raise them above indigence, and to place them in a state more independent. It might put it more in their power, to relieve the distresses of others, and make their latter days, the days of Age and Infirmary, flow with more chearfulness and comfort. These would be essential services, and whilst thus employed, they would be giving to their families an example of Industry, and, at the same time, training up their Children in the same respectable way. In these praise-worthy Labours, they are providing a double security against being brought to a parish allowance, *first*, by the fruits of their own Industry; and *secondly*, by so educating their Children, that they may derive something from their assistance, when the hand, that nourished them and laboured for them, is now withered by old age and infirmity. I might add, that they could scarcely engage in any duty more laudable and more innocent, more beneficial



cial to the world, and I hope too, more pleasing to their God. Industry in many cases, has much more of Innocence, Duty and Religion in it, than even such sacrifices as they offer. To neglect ones family, upon any pretence whatsoever, cannot be to serve our God. It is an excellent character, that God himself gives of Abraham, when he says, *For I know him, that he will command his Children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do Justice and Judgment.* And on the other hand, the many Mistortunes, that fell upon the good old Eli and his house, were brought upon him for the neglect of his Children. The reasons, assigned by God, are very remarkable, *I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity, which he knoweth, because his Sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.* I have insisted at some length, on this part, because the subject is of the greatest Importance. But with such Reflections let us leave it, and proceed to consider them, under another relative Duty, that of Masters and Servants.

SUCH of them as are in the rank of Masters, I presume, you will not find more humane, or exacting servitude with less rigour, than other men. Their leading principles do not cherish these virtues, which characterise a good Master. And with regard to Servants, excepting in families of their own principles, they cannot be very desirable. Their Religion does not teach them any peculiar faithfulness or honesty: they however are in general, more confident and self-willed,

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less cheerful and tractable. Add to these, that they are disposed to devote too much of their time to their Societies, to be found faithful to their Masters. I have omitted to say any thing about the other relative duties; because I can find in them nothing to distinguish them from the rest of the world. In these things they follow the natural bent of their minds, and are but little indebted, for improvement, to their religious principles.

BUT there remains still a material inquiry, to determine the Effect, that this religion has upon Society at large, and whither such principles should be encouraged by us as Patriots and by Citizens.

IN the first place, Methodism is one of the severest Taxes, that ever was laid upon the labouring part of the people; and of consequence is a pressing Burthen upon Industry. Such a number of Religious Houses, some of them very elegant and highly finished; and such a number of fixed and travelling Teachers, cannot be supported, without an enormous expence. This expence falls almost intirely upon the labouring part of the Community, of which this body chiefly consists. Indeed there are many instances of places, where they have both good Houses and plenty of Preachers. and these to be supported entirely by the poor. It would be a curious Enquiry, and might answer some good political purpose, to investigate what Methodism costs the Nation annually.

nually. There are indeed some, that could furnish great assistance to this Enquiry ; but the mischief is, that it is not the interest of such people to give it encouragement. There are a vast number of good Houses, built throughout the Kingdom, for the religious Worship of these people, and these not in the meanest form. Pride and Ambition peep out here, under all the disguise of Sanctity and pretended lowliness of mind. These Houses are not without their Ornaments, and some of them in a superior style. At a moderate computation, and taking them upon an Average, they cannot be less than five hundred pounds each. This is all so much money sunk ; and cannot be rated at less than Eight per Cent. which amounts to forty pounds annually. To this must be added the expence of lighting these Houses, which in some places must amount to something very considerable ; as they have so much of early and late Service, particularly in the Winter Season. To this, likewise add the cleaning, and all the Servants attending upon such occasions. I am sure, I must be very moderate, when I rate the whole at thirty pounds annually. Now, for each of these Houses, a Preacher must be provided. I do not mean that he constantly resides ; but taking it upon the whole, there must be one Preacher at least, to each Methodist Meeting in the Kingdom ; and his Salary, considering he has to keep a Horse, cannot fall short of sixty pounds. This is the very lowest. It is of little consequence, what the nominal Salary may be, not less than the above allow-

allowance, can be sufficient to support them in the manner they live. So adding these several Sums together, it makes one hundred and thirty pounds, that each Methodist Meeting costs the Nation; a Sum, I am sure, not overrated. But how, in the next place, shall we come at the number of these Houses? There is nothing left for me on this point but Conjecture; we must only take care that this random computation may not exceed the Truth. The number of parishes in England and Wales including also Scotland, are about eleven Thousand. Now, let us suppose, there is one Methodist Meeting for every four parishes. If this estimate be just, it will give us for the number required two thousand seven hundred and fifty, which multiplied by one hundred and thirty pounds, the Sum necessary to the support of each, gives three hundred and fifty-seven thousand five hundred pounds; an enormous Sum, as a Tax raised upon the Credulity, and Folly, of the lowest Order of the people; a people, who never pay any kind of Tax for the support of Government.

BUT this is not the only expence, with which this religion saddles the publick. There is a very great Sum constantly spent in Entertainment, not merely for the Preachers, but for the Guests also; with whom they are attended: for they very seldom travel alone. Convoys regularly accompany them from Town to Town, and these live upon the first good House, that they meet with in the list of their Friends. To be sure, it is said;  
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such Taxes and Expences are only voluntary ; but as they are extorted from the Benevolence and Hospitality of the People, they should with propriety be set down to the account of this Religion. They are given not upon the principle of Charity ; but entirely upon the account of their Profession, and cannot be placed to any other charge. I know it will be said, that the Contributions, which the poor people pay towards the support of this Religion, by being given in small sums, and at regular periods, can neither be felt nor missed by the giver ; that they are the offerings of a free heart, and therefore should not be enumerated in the list of Taxes. Granting this last part to be true, we must still insist, that all the Motions and Delusions of the Heart, will never stand as an Excuse for a number of Actions. And however insensible, the drain may be, the amount, in a short time, becomes considerable ; considerable, I mean, when you regard the station and the fortune of the Giver. It is no less a Tax, though it be voluntary ; we pay Taxes for our Luxuries and Follies often, which are many times paid without a grudging Heart : but they are no less Taxes on that account ; and so also are those, men pay for Religion. But this is not the worst view, that we may take of the Religion of the Methodists, even in a political sense. This profession has, besides all these, a baleful influence upon Industry. It is a nursery for Idleness, and the high road often to Beggary. In making this assertion, I must be understood to speak in general, I  
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know, you can produce numberless Instances of men in this profession, which I have already allowed, that are keen, sharp sighted in all worldly matters, and understand their earthly interest to a very great degree of perfection. But granting all this, the great Mass of the poorer people, that attend upon the Methodists. contract habits of Idleness in this very pursuit; habits that flow naturally from this profession, as effects do from their causes. The frequency of their meetings; the great part of time consumed in their services; the gossiping part of the after business; and the large acquaintance, they contract in these social meetings; the visits, that they pay and have returned, in consequence of this large connection, all tend to destroy the habits of Industry, and to bring likewise additional expences on their votaries. There are no people, that have such a numerous acquaintance as the Methodists; and there are none, who spend so much time in society. Besides their clubs in Towns and Villages where they reside, you often meet with parties of them strolling into the Country. They have generally some pretext for their excursions, visiting the Sick, comforting the afflicted, reclaiming the wicked and fortifying some weak Brother. It is not barely the gifted member, that goes on this Business, but he commonly travels in a kind of state, accompanied with a body guard, and there are always found a sufficient number of volunteers for this Service; for on such occasions, there is generally tolerably good living. Habits of this kind of Strolling and Gossiping,  
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once contracted, are not easily laid down; they find it much more agreeable to pray or to attend prayers, than to follow their usual Trades, or Occupations; especially in a cause where they themselves are in no great danger of present starving. You may easily guess the situation of Families, when the Heads find it convenient to betake themselves to such Services. They do not always fare so well as their principals. They must either be half starved or have recourse to a parish allowance. If a Methodist have a good Front and a Talent for talking, he commences an active member, and soon finds enough of employment. But if he is not fortunate in rising to some station, to which a Salary is affixed; whatever services he may do for his own Soul, and the Souls of others. in the end, both he and his family must be thrown upon the mercies of the world. It is easy to see the unhappy effect, that this Religion has upon the Industry of the Nation. The Poor are severely taxed, whilst at the same time, they are led to neglect their usual Occupations, and incur extraordinary expences in their religious Profession. To sum up the whole of this part of the account, it appears, I think, very certain, that Society is not much benefitted by Methodism: it would be well, if I could say, it was not much injured.

OF late years there has been a very general Complaint, over every part of the Kingdom, of the increase of the parish poor. To what cause are we principally to ascribe this increase? There are, to be sure, several that contribute very considerably:

siderably : the Luxury and Dissipation of the age ; the Idleness and Extravagance of the lower classes of mankind ; the increasing disproportion, between the price of Labour and the necessaries of Life ; but, perhaps, no cause whatever, has a more powerful influence, than the increase of the Methodists. I have shewn, that this Religion is, in the *first* place, a heavy Tax, and, that in the *second*, it encourages Idleness ; and both of these contribute to make men poor, and to keep them in that state. I would propose it then as a subject for inquiry. Have the poor Rates increased with the increase of Methodism ? Perhaps upon examination they will be found to have kept pace with the progress of this Religion. And it would give this opinion some weight, if the rates, in particular places, have corresponded with the prevalence of Methodism. This Hint, I only throw out, to give to others an opportunity of directing their attentions to this part of the subject. But a second question might be proposed. Have the Poor in Scotland, where this Profession has fewer votaries, increased with that rapidity, that they have done in the Southren parts of the Island ? Whatever be the cause, however of this increase, it begins now to be an evil very alarming, and it is the Duty of every good Citizen and Patriot, to exert himself, in discouraging every principle and practice, which, whatever be its pretensions, can never be the Child of true Religion, if it encourages Idleness and Dissipation, these great Foes to the Peace and Happiness of Mankind.



AT the Conclusion of this Review, there are several Reflections that naturally occur.

FIRST. The striking marks of Policy, and Art, so evident in the planning, and support, of this Religion, are very unlike the simplicity of the Gospel, and afford occasion for suspecting the Honesty, and Integrity of their Leaders. Craft and Cunning appear here, but too plainly, seizing on the Prejudices and Credulity of the Ignorant and the Weak, in order to raise a monument to their Ambition, or to create a Fund for their Interest. Snares are planted all around, and the unwary Bird when once caught, will find an escape most difficult. For however enthusiastic, the Followers may be, the Leaders seem perfectly cool, and collected. There is a Semblance of Enthusiasm, but wary prudence regulates every step. Every thing is contrived for ensnaring the Credulous. Honesty, good Sense, Knowledge and Character are sacrificed to this end. The Journal of Mr. W. illustrates and confirms this Observation. You see there, a man of good sense and Knowledge, retailing Stories and Anecdotes, full of falsehood and absurdity, and which no man of common understanding can possibly swallow : but they are all so calculated as to suit the understanding of his followers, Among the Leaders, I know many men of good sense, who would not suffer themselves to be imposed upon by such gross absurdities, unless their Interest, or their Ambition in some measure warped their Judgments.

THE good and the evil Spirits make a conspicuous figure in this work, the one is full of malice, and continually employed in wickedness, or in playing his antick tricks; and the other, perpetually counteracting his machinations. In this Contest Mr. W. appears as a powerful and respectable auxiliary. The evil Spirit he checks and controuls, and the good he rouses, by his vigilance and superior attention. These are all pious Frauds, Religion has too often been made a Ladder for the Interest and Ambition of men.

BUT *secondly*. Such corruptions of Religion, it is the duty of every man to unmask and expose, for they are dead weights upon the progress of the Gospel. What people of common sense could ever be prevailed on to believe that a Religion, that promotes Hypocrisy, that discourages Virtue, that checks Industry, and in many material instances injures Society; that requires so much human policy for its support, and the aid of so much pious Fraud, could ever proceed from Heaven and a God of infinite Wisdom, Holiness and Goodness. Men are apt to form their first opinion of a Religion, not so much from its original principles, as from the lives and conduct of its Professors; and sensible Heathens or Mahometans, seeing such forbidding marks in those, who pretend to so much superior sanctity, will not be disposed to entertain a very favourable Judgment of that religion itself. The lives of the primitive Christians were perhaps the most successful, evidence for the propagation of the Gospel.

BUT these corruptions have another unhappy Effect. Men will become ashamed of a Profession; where the Hypocrite and the Impostor claim such a distinguished place. The encouragement that is given to their ignorant and unprincipled Teachers, brings the character itself into disgrace.

AT this time several Churches are occupied by the Methodists, and a great many Dissenting Chapels, and if this Spirit continues, a much greater share will fall into the hands of these Enthusiasts. We may easily judge then, in what manner the beautiful doctrines and precepts of the Gospel will be illustrated, and with what success the defence of its truths will be supported, against the attacks and sneers of Unbelievers. Ignorance in every other Profession becomes despicable, whilst persons possessed neither of common sense nor common decency take upon themselves, to talk upon the most interesting and noble topics of the Gospel, without the least delicacy or attention, and meet with every encouragement; as if good Sense and Decorum were required in every thing, but Religion.

IN the Revolution of human knowledge and Science, the prevalence of this Spirit, and these doctrines may carry us back to our former religious darkness, and involve Christianity in all that barbarous and unintelligible Jargon, which it required the Labour of ages to remove.

THIRDLY.

THIRDLY. Much noise and great pretensions throw suspicion on any Character. Religion consists not in talking, but in acting; not in saying fine things, but in doing good things. Great professions of Friendship are the certain indications of a hollow and a false Heart, and perpetual talking about Religion, gives cause to suspect that there is something materially wrong in the Life. The good man is modest and humble; the Hypocrite forward and ostentatious, the good man prays in secret, the hypocrite proclaims his goodness to the world, and does all his works to be seen of men. Keep a watchful eye over him, who professes much and who talks much about Religion.

FOURTHLY. True Religion is perfectly consistent with our honest Callings, and all lawful professions. It interferes not with any one duty in life; but promotes all duties. God is to be served by taking care of our Families, as well as by praying to him; by doing good and discharging our duties in life with faithfulness and integrity, as well as by attending Sermons. Our Saviour has given us his sentiments in this point, in his usual short but comprehensive manner, when answering the reproaches of the ancient Methodists, who found fault with him for healing a man on the Sabbath day; "*I will have mercy and not sacrifice.*" The doing good and the being useful, He rates higher than all other services. Estimate your Character, not by the number of Sermons you have heard, or the prayers

prayers you have attended. These are labours not merely useless, but unpardonable, if they cause you to neglect your Families or your daily labour, or if they interfere with any important duty of Life. Many run after these Exercises, from a principle of Idleness; or to have an excuse to justify themselves for the neglect of the duties of their Station or Families.

But *lastly*. Let not the good man be too much discouraged by present appearances. The Religious Ferment which is now working furiously, we trust may end well. Providence may be employing this Instrument for introducing more Knowledge and Virtue among men. If it should prove the means of directing the ignorant to serious Enquiry, and rousing men of virtue and understanding to the defence and support of genuine Religion: if it should stimulate the Ministers of Religion, to exert themselves in recommending the sublime Doctrines and pure Precepts of the Gospel, and in adorning them by the Meekness and Innocence of their Lives; this would be the way to rescue the ignorant and deluded from the hands of Enthusiasts and Impostors; and then Christianity would become a Light to enlighten the Gentiles, the Honour and Ornament of human Nature; and the Glory of all its Professors.

F I N I S.











